
2005 Country Reports on Human Rights

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[The following are excerpts of the 2005 Country Reports on Human Rights. To read the report in its entirety please go to the following web site: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61550.htm>.]

Introduction

These reports describe the performance of 196 countries in putting into practice their international commitments on human rights. These basic rights, reflected in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have been embraced by people of every culture and color, every background and belief, and constitute what President Bush calls the “non-negotiable demands of human dignity.”

The Department of State published the first annual country reports on human rights practices in 1977 in accordance with congressional mandate, and they have become an essential element of the United States’ effort to promote respect for human rights worldwide. For nearly three decades, the reports have served as a reference document and a foundation for cooperative action among governments, organizations, and individuals seeking to end abuses and strengthen the capacity of countries to protect the fundamental rights of all.

The worldwide championing of human rights is not an attempt to impose alien values on citizens of other countries or to interfere in their internal affairs. The Universal Declaration calls upon:

every individual and every organ of society – to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance . . .

President Bush has committed the United States to working with other democracies and men and women of goodwill across the globe to reach an historic long-term goal: “the end of tyranny in our world.”

To be sure, violations of human rights and miscarriages of justice can and do occur in democratic countries. No governmental system is without flaws. Human rights conditions in democracies across the globe vary widely, and these country reports reflect that fact. In particular, democratic systems with shallow roots and scarce resources can fall far short of meeting their solemn commitments to citizens, including human rights commitments. Democratic transitions can be tumultuous and wrenching. Rampant corruption can retard democratic development, distort judicial processes, and destroy public trust. Nonetheless, taken overall, countries with democratic systems provide far greater protections against violations of human rights than do nondemocratic states.

The United States’ own journey toward liberty and justice for all has been long and difficult, and it is still far from complete. Yet over time our independent branches of government, our free media, our openness to the world, and, most importantly, the civic courage of impatient American patriots help us keep faith with our founding ideals and our international human rights obligations.

These country reports offer a factual basis by which to assess the progress made on human rights and the challenges that remain. The reports review each country’s performance in 2005, not one country’s performance against that of another. While each country report speaks for itself, cross-cutting observations can be made. Six broad observations, supported by country-specific examples, are highlighted below. The examples are illustrative, not exhaustive.

First, countries in which power is concentrated in the hands of unaccountable rulers tend to be the world’s most systematic human rights violators. These states range from closed, totalitarian systems that subject their citizens to a wholesale deprivation of their basic rights to authoritarian

systems in which the exercise of basic rights is severely restricted. In 2005 the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) remained one of the world's most isolated countries. The systematically repressive regime continued to control almost all aspects of citizens' lives, denying freedoms of speech, religion, the press, assembly, association, and movement, as well as workers' rights. In December 2005, the regime further receded into isolation by calling for significant drawdowns of the international non-governmental organization presence in the country.

In Burma where a junta rules by diktat, promises of democratic reform and respect for human rights continued to serve as a façade for brutality and repression. Forced labor, trafficking in persons, use of child soldiers, and religious discrimination remained serious concerns. The military's continuing abuses included systematic use of rape, torture, execution, and forced relocation of citizens belonging to ethnic minorities. The regime maintained iron-fisted control through the surveillance, harassment, and imprisonment of political activists, including Nobel Laureate and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who remained under house arrest without charge.

In 2005 the Iranian government's already poor record on human rights and democracy worsened. In the June presidential elections, slightly more than a thousand registered candidates, including all the female candidates were arbitrarily thrown out of contention by the country's guardian council. The newly elected hard-line president denied the Holocaust occurred and called for the elimination of Israel. The ruling clerics and the president oversaw deterioration in prison conditions for the hundreds of political prisoners, further restrictions on press freedom, and a continuing rollback of social and political freedoms. Serious abuses such as summary executions, severe violations of religious freedom, discrimination based on ethnicity and religion, disappearances, extremist vigilantism, and use of torture and other degrading treatment continued. In Zimbabwe the government maintained a steady assault on human dignity and basic freedoms, tightening its hold on civil society and human rights non-government organizations and manipulating the March parliamentary elections. Opposition members were subjected to abuse, including torture and rape. New constitutional amendments allowed the government to restrict exit from the country, transferred title to the government of all land reassigned in the land acquisition program, and removed the right to challenge land acquisitions in court. The government's Operation Restore Order, initiated to demolish allegedly illegal housing and businesses, displaced or destroyed the livelihoods of more than 700 thousand persons and further strained the country's weak and depressed economy. In Cuba the regime continued to control all aspects of life through the communist party and state-controlled mass organizations. The regime suppressed calls for democratic reform, such as the Varela Project, which proposed a national referendum. Authorities arrested, detained, fined, and threatened Varela activists and the government held at least 333 political prisoners and detainees.

China's human rights record remained poor, and the government continued to commit serious abuses. Those who publicly advocated against Chinese government policies or views or protested against government authority faced harassment, detention, and imprisonment by government and security authorities. Disturbances of public order and protests calling for redress of grievances increased significantly, and several incidents were violently suppressed. Key measures to increase the authority of the judiciary and reduce the arbitrary power of police and security forces stalled. Restrictions of the media and the Internet continued. Repression of minority groups continued unabated, particularly of Uighurs and Tibetans. New religious affairs regulations were adopted expanding legal protection for some activities of registered religious groups, but repression of unregistered religious groups continued, as did repression of the Falun Gong spiritual movement.

In Belarus President Lukashenko continued to arrogate all power to himself and his dictatorial regime. Pro-democracy activists, including opposition politicians, independent trade union leaders, students, and newspaper editors, were detained, fined, and imprisoned for criticizing Lukashenko and his regime. His government increasingly used tax inspections and new registration requirements to

complicate or deny non-government organizations, independent media, political parties, and minority and religious organizations the ability to operate legally.

Second, human rights and democracy are closely linked, and both are essential to long-term stability and security. Free and democratic nations that respect the rights of their citizens help to lay the foundation for lasting peace. In contrast, states that severely and systematically violate the human rights of their own people are likely to pose threats to neighboring countries and the international community.

Burma is a case in point. Only by Burma's return to the democratic path from which it was wrenched can the basic rights of the Burmese people be realized. The junta refuses to recognize the results of the historic free and fair legislative elections in 1990. The regime's cruel and destructive misrule has inflicted tremendous suffering on the Burmese people and caused or exacerbated a host of ills for its neighbors, from refugee outflows to the spread of infectious diseases and the trafficking of drugs and human beings. On December 16, the U.N. Security Council held a landmark discussion on the situation in Burma.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is another example. When the Korean peninsula was divided, the DPRK and the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) were at roughly the same economic point, and both were subject to authoritarian rule. Political and economic freedom has made the difference between the two Koreas. Today, North Koreans are deprived of the most basic freedoms, while the regime's authoritarian rule produced tens of thousands of refugees. The government earned hard currency through illicit activities, including narcotics trafficking, counterfeiting of currency and goods such as cigarettes, and smuggling. Pyongyang has not heeded the international community's repeated calls to dismantle its nuclear programs.

The Iranian government continued to ignore the desire of the Iranian people for responsible, accountable government, continuing its dangerous policies of pursuing a nuclear weapons capability, providing support to terrorist organizations, and advocating, including in several public speeches by the new president, the destruction of a U.N. member state. Iran's deprivation of basic rights to its own people, its interference in Iraq, its support for Hizballah, Hamas, and other terrorist organizations, and its refusal to engage constructively on these issues, have further isolated it from the world community.

Similarly, the government of Syria refused international calls to respect the fundamental freedoms of its people and end its interference in the affairs of its neighbors. Syria continued to provide support for Hizballah, Hamas, and other Palestinian rejectionist groups and did not cooperate fully with the U.N. International independent investigative commission on the assassination in Beirut of former Lebanese Prime Minister al-Hariri. The Chief investigator's reports concluded that evidence pointed to involvement by Syrian authorities and made it clear that Syrian officials, while purporting to cooperate, deliberately misled the investigators.

By contrast, in the Balkans, a marked overall improvement in human rights, democracy, and the rule of law over the past several years has led to greater stability and security in the region. Increasingly democratic governments are in place, more war criminals are facing justice, significant numbers of displaced persons have returned home, elections are progressively more compliant with international standards, and neighbors are deepening their cooperation to resolve post-conflict and regional problems. Many countries of the former Yugoslavia have made progress in bringing persons accused of war crimes to trial in domestic courts, which is important to national reconciliation and regional stability. At the end of 2005, however, two of the most wanted war crimes suspects, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, remained at large. Third, some of the most serious violations of human rights are committed by governments within the context of internal and/or cross-border armed conflicts.

The Sudanese government's 2003 attempt to quell a minor uprising of African rebels in Darfur by arming Janjaweed militias and allowing them to ravage the region resulted in a vicious conflict. The Department of State in September of 2004 determined that genocide occurred in Darfur. It continued in 2005. By the end of 2005, at least 70 thousand civilians had perished, nearly 2 million had been displaced by the fighting, and more than 200 thousand refugees had fled into neighboring Chad. Torture was widespread and systematic in Darfur, as was violence against women, including rape used as a tool of war. There were reports of women being marched away into the desert; their fate remained unknown. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed by the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement opened the way to adopt a constitution in July and form a government of national unity to serve until elections in 2009. The African Union deployed seven thousand troops to Darfur, where their presence helped curb some but not all of the violence. At the end of 2005, government-supported Janjaweed attacks on civilians continued.

Nepal's poor human rights record worsened. The government continued to commit many serious abuses, both during and after the February-April state of emergency that suspended all fundamental rights except for habeas corpus. In many cases the government disregarded habeas corpus orders issued by the Supreme Court and often rearrested student and political party leaders. The Maoist insurgents also continued their campaign of torturing, killing, bombing, conscripting children, kidnapping, extorting, and forcing closures of schools and businesses.

The political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, which continued to divide the country, led to further abuses in 2005, including rape, torture, and extra judicial killings committed by government and rebel security forces. There were fewer reports of rebel recruitment of child soldiers, and many were released. Violence and threats of violence against the political opposition continued. Despite continued efforts by the international community and the African Union, the political process to establish a power-sharing government remained stalled. By the end of September, little work had been completed to prepare for the scheduled October 30, 2005 elections, and disarmament of the New Forces rebel group had not begun. On October 6, 2005 the African Union decided to extend President Laurent Gbagbo's term in office by up to one year.

In Chechnya and elsewhere in Russia's Northern Caucasus region, federal forces and pro-Moscow Chechen forces engaged in abuses including torture, summary executions, disappearances, and arbitrary detentions. Pro-Moscow Chechen para-militaries at times appeared to act independently of the Russian command structure, and there was been no indication that the federal authorities made any effective effort to rein them in or hold them accountable for egregious abuses. Antigovernment forces also continued to commit terrorist bombings and serious human rights abuses in the North Caucasus. The year 2005 saw the continued spread of violence and abuses throughout the region, where there was an overall climate of lawlessness and corruption.

The Great Lakes region of central Africa, encompassing the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, has been plagued by civil war, large-scale interethnic violence, and severe conflict-related human rights abuses for well over a decade. However, there was less violence overall in 2005, and the human rights situation improved markedly, encouraging tens of thousands of displaced persons, particularly Burundians, to return home. Burundi concluded its four-year transitional process, and there were historical electoral advances in the DRC. Governments in the Great Lakes region made significant progress in demobilizing thousands of child soldiers in their military forces and those belonging to various rebel groups. At the same time, various armed groups based in eastern Congo continued to destabilize the region and compete with one another for strategic and natural resources, despite U.N. supported Congolese military operations to disband armed groups in the DRC. Thousands of rebels from Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, including Rwandan rebels who led the 1994 Rwandan genocide, continued to oppose the government of their respective countries, attack civilians in the DRC, and commit numerous serious abuses, particularly against women and

children. The governments of Rwanda and Uganda reportedly continued illegally to channel arms to armed groups operating and committing abuses in the eastern DRC.

In Colombia, human rights violations related to the 41-year internal armed conflict continued. However, the government's concentrated military offensive against illegal armed groups and ongoing demobilization of paramilitary groups led to reductions in killings and kidnappings. Colombia also began a four-year process to implement a new adversarial accusatory-style criminal procedures code. However, impunity remained a major obstacle, particularly for officials accused of committing past human rights abuses, as well as for certain members of the military who collaborated with paramilitary groups.

Fourth, where civil society and independent media are under siege, fundamental freedoms of expression, association, and assembly are undermined. A robust civil society and independent media help create conditions under which human rights can flourish by raising awareness among publics about their rights, exposing abuses, pressing for reform, and holding governments accountable. Governments should defend not abuse, the peaceful exercise of fundamental freedoms by members of the media and civil society even if they do not agree with their views or actions. Restrictions that are imposed by law on the exercise of such freedoms can only be justified to the extent they are consistent with a country's human rights obligations and are not merely a pretext for restricting such rights.

When states wield the law as a political weapon or an instrument of repression against civil society and the media, they rule by law rather than upholding the rule of law. The rule of law acts as a check on state power, i.e., it is a system designed to protect the human rights of the individual against the power of the state. In contrast, rule by law can be an abuse of power, i.e., the manipulation of the law and the judicial system to maintain the power of the rulers over the ruled.

In 2005, a disturbing number of countries across the globe passed or selectively applied laws against the media and non-government organizations. For example:

- The Cambodian government utilized existing criminal defamation laws to intimidate, arrest, and prosecute critics and opposition members over the course of the year.
- China increased restrictions on the media and the Internet, leading to two known arrests.
- The Zimbabwean government arrested persons who criticized President Mugabe, harassed and arbitrarily detained journalists, closed an independent newspaper, forcibly dispersed demonstrators, and arrested and detained opposition leaders and their supporters.

In Venezuela new laws governing libel, defamation, and broadcast media content, coupled with legal harassment and physical intimidation, resulted in limitations on media freedoms and a climate of self-censorship. There continued to be reports that government representatives and supporters intimidated and threatened members of the political opposition, several human rights non-government organizations, and other civil society groups. Some non-government organizations also charged that the government used the judiciary to place limitations on the political opposition.

In Belarus the Lukashenko government stepped up its suppression of opposition groups and imposed new restrictions on civil society. There were politically motivated arrests, several independent newspapers were closed, the operations of others were hindered, and non-government organizations were harassed.

In Russia raids on non-government organization offices, registration problems, intimidation of non-government organization leaders and staff and visa problems for foreign non-government organizational workers had a negative effect, as did the parliament's adoption of a new restrictive law on non-government organizations. The Kremlin also acted to limit critical voices in the media. The government decreased the diversity of the broadcast media, particularly television, the main source of

news for the majority of Russians. By the end of 2005, all independent nationwide television stations had been taken over either by the state or by state-friendly organizations.

Fifth, democratic elections by themselves do not ensure that human rights will be respected, but they can put a country on the path to reform and lay the groundwork for institutionalizing human rights protections. Democratic elections are, however, milestones on a long journey of democratization. They are essential to establishing accountable governments and governmental institutions that abide by the rule of law and are responsive to the needs of citizens.

In Iraq 2005 was a year of major progress for democracy, democratic rights and freedom. There was a steady growth of non-government organizations and other civil society associations that promote human rights. The January 30th legislative elections marked a tremendous step forward in solidifying governmental institutions to protect human rights and freedom in a country whose history is marred by some of the worst human rights abuses in the recent past. In an October 15 referendum and December 15 election, Iraqi voters adopted a permanent constitution and elected members of the country's new legislature, the Council of Representatives, thus consolidating democratic institutions that can provide a framework for a democratic future. Although the historic elections and new institutions of democratic government provided a structure for real advances, civic life and the social fabric remained under intense strain from the widespread violence principally inflicted by insurgent and terrorist elements. Additionally, elements of sectarian militias and security forces frequently acted independently of government authority. Still, the government set and adhered to a legal and electoral course based on respect for political rights.

Although deprived of basic human rights for years, Afghans in 2005 continued to show their courage and commitment to a future of freedom and respect for human rights. September 18 marked the first parliamentary elections in nearly three decades. Women enthusiastically voted in the elections, which included 582 female candidates for office. Sixty-eight women were elected to the lower House in seats reserved for women under the 2004 Constitution. Seventeen of the 68 women would have been elected in their own right even without the set-aside seats. In the upper House, 17 of the 34 seats appointed by the president were reserved for women; the Provincial Councils elected an additional 5 women for a total of 22 women. The September 18 parliamentary elections occurred against the backdrop of a government still struggling to expand its authority over provincial centers, due to continued insecurity and violent resistance in some quarters.

In Ukraine there were notable improvements in human rights performance following the Orange Revolution, which led to the election of a new government reflecting the will of the people. In 2005 there was increased accountability by police officers, and the mass media made gains in independence. Interference with freedom of assembly largely ceased, and most limitations on freedom of association were lifted. A wide variety of domestic and international human rights groups also generally operated without government harassment.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim majority country, made significant progress in strengthening the architecture of its democratic system. Through a series of historic local elections, Indonesians were able directly to elect their leaders at the city, regency, and provincial levels for the first time. There were improvements in the human rights situation, although significant problems remained, and serious violations continued. A critical development was the landmark August 15 peace agreement with the Free Aceh Movement ending decades of armed conflict. The government also inaugurated the Papuan People's Assembly and took other steps toward fulfilling the 2001 Special Autonomy Law on Papua.

Lebanon made significant progress in ending the 29-year Syrian military occupation and regaining sovereignty under a democratically elected parliament. However, continuing Syrian influence remained a problem.

Liberia emerged into the international democratic arena with its dramatic step away from a violent past and toward a free and democratic future. On November 23, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was declared the winner of multiparty presidential elections, making her Africa's first elected female head of state and marking a milestone in the country's transition from civil war to democracy. The transitional government generally respected the human rights of its citizens and passed legislation to strengthen human rights. However, police abuse, official corruption, and other problems persisted and were exacerbated by the legacy of the 14-year civil war, including severely damaged infrastructure and widespread poverty and unemployment.

Sixth, progress on democratic reform and human rights is neither linear nor guaranteed. Some states still have weak institutions of democratic government and continue to struggle; others have yet to fully commit to the democratic process. Steps forward can be marred with irregularities. There can be serious setbacks. Democratically elected governments do not always govern democratically once in power.

In 2005, many countries that have committed themselves to democratic reform showed mixed progress; some regressed.

The Kyrgyz Republic's human rights record improved considerably following the change in leadership between March and July, although problems remained. President Akayev fled the country after opposition demonstrators took over the main government building in the capital to protest flawed elections. The July presidential election and November parliamentary election constituted improvements in some areas over previous elections. However, constitutional reform stalled and corruption remained a serious problem.

In Ecuador, congress removed democratically elected President Lucio Gutierrez in April following large scale protests and public withdrawal of support by the military and the national police leadership. Vice President Alfredo Palacio succeeded Gutierrez, and elections were scheduled for 2006.

Although the transitional government of the Democratic Republic of Congo postponed national general elections until 2006, the country held its first democratic national poll in 40 years. Voters overwhelmingly approved a new constitution in a largely free and fair national referendum, despite some irregularities.

In June, the Ugandan parliament approved a controversial amendment to eliminate presidential term limits, clearing the way for President Museveni to seek a third term. However, citizens voted in a national referendum to adopt a multiparty system of government, and the parliament amended the electoral laws to include opposition party participation in elections and in government.

The Egyptian government amended its constitution to provide for the country's first multiparty presidential election in September. Ten political parties fielded candidates, and the campaign period was marked by vigorous public debate and greater political awareness and engagement. Voter turnout was low, however, and there were credible reports of widespread fraud during balloting. Presidential runner-up Ayman Nour, his parliamentary immunity stripped away in January, was sentenced in December on forgery charges to five years' imprisonment after a six-month trial that failed to meet basic international standards. The November and December parliamentary elections witnessed significant gains by candidates affiliated with the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. These elections were marred by excessive use of force by security forces, low turnout, and vote-rigging. The government refused to admit international observers for either the presidential or parliamentary elections. The National Council for Human Rights, established by the Egyptian parliament, issued its first annual report, frankly describing government abuses.

During the Ethiopian parliamentary elections in May, international observers noted numerous irregularities and voter intimidation. Scores of demonstrators protesting the elections were killed

by security forces. Authorities detained, beat, and killed opposition members, non-government organization workers, ethnic minorities, and members of the press.

Azerbaijan's November parliamentary elections, while an improvement in some areas, failed to meet a number of international standards. There were numerous credible reports of local officials interfering with the campaign process and misusing state resources, limited freedom of assembly, disproportionate use of force by police to disrupt rallies, and fraud and major irregularities in vote counting and tabulation. Thus far, additional actions taken during the postelection grievance process have not fully addressed the shortcomings of the electoral process.

Kazakhstan showed improvements in the pre-election period for the December presidential election, but overall it fell short of international standards for free and fair elections. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights noted serious limitations on political speech that prohibited certain kinds of criticism of the president, unequal access to the media for opposition and independent candidates, and violent disruptions of opposition campaign events. Legislation enacted during 2005, in particular the extremism law, national security amendments, and election law amendments, eroded legal protections for human rights and expanded the powers of the executive branch to regulate and control civil society and the media. But the Constitutional Court deemed unconstitutional a restrictive non-government organization law.

Uzbekistan's human rights record, already poor, worsened considerably in 2005. A violent uprising in May in the city of Andijon led to disproportionate use of force by the authorities and a wave of repressive government actions that dominated the remainder of the year. The uprising started after a series of daily peaceful protests in support of businessmen on trial between February and May for Islamic extremism. On the night of May 12-13, unidentified individuals seized weapons from a police garrison, stormed the city prison where the defendants were being held, killed several guards, and released several hundred inmates, including the defendants. They then occupied the regional administration building and took hostages. On May 13, according to eyewitness accounts, government forces fired indiscriminately into a crowd that included unarmed civilians, resulting in hundreds of deaths. In the aftermath, the government harassed, beat, and jailed dozens of human rights activists, journalists, and others who spoke out about the events and sentenced numerous people to prison in trials that did not meet international standards. The government forced numerous domestic and international non-government organizations to close and severely restricted those that continued to operate.

In Russia, efforts continued to concentrate power in the Kremlin and direct democracy from the top down. To those ends, the Kremlin abolished direct elections of governors in favor of presidential nomination and legislative approval. In the current Russian context, where checks and balances are weak at best, this system limits government accountability to voters while further concentrating power in the executive branch. Amendments to the electoral and political party law amendments, billed as intended to strengthen nationwide political parties in the longer term, could in fact reduce the ability of opposition parties to compete in elections. This trend, taken together with continuing media restrictions, a compliant parliament, corruption and selectivity in enforcement of the law, political pressure on the judiciary, and harassment of some non-government organizations, resulted in an erosion of the accountability of government leaders to the people.

Pakistan's human rights record continued to be poor, despite President Musharraf's stated commitment to democratic transition and "enlightened moderation." Restrictions remained on freedom of movement, expression, association, and religion. Progress on democratization was limited. During elections for local governments in 2005, international and domestic observers found serious flaws, including interference by political parties, which affected the outcome of the vote in parts of the country. Police detained approximately 10 thousand Pakistan People's Party activists in April prior to the arrival for a rally of Benazir Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari. The security forces committed

extra judicial killings, violations of due process, arbitrary arrest, and torture. Corruption was pervasive throughout the government and police forces, and the government made little attempt to combat the problem. Security force officials who committed human rights abuses generally enjoyed de facto legal impunity.

Despite hard realities and high obstacles, there is an increasing worldwide demand for greater personal and political freedom and for the spread of democratic principles. For example, in the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) region, recent years have witnessed the beginnings of political pluralism, unprecedented elections, new protections for women and minorities, and indigenous calls for peaceful, democratic change.

At the November 2005 Forum for the Future held in Manama, Bahrain, 40 leaders representing civil society organizations from 16 BMENA countries participated alongside their foreign ministers. The civil society leaders outlined a set of priorities with a particular focus on rule of law, transparency, human rights, and women's empowerment. Among those serving on this civil society delegation were representatives from the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD), who presented the outcomes of discussions and debates held over the course of the year between civil society leaders and their government counterparts on the critical topics of election reform and the development of legitimate political parties. The growing DAD network includes hundreds of civil society leaders from the BMENA region. To better support growing reform efforts in the region, a Foundation for the Future to provide support directly to civil society and a Fund for the Future to support investment in the region, were also launched at the Forum. The level and depth of civil society participation at the Forum for the Future was historic and positive and set an important precedent for genuine dialogue and partnership between civil society and governments on issues of political reform.

The Forum for the Future is just one of the many mechanisms through which the United States, other Group of 8 countries, and regional governments support the indigenous desire for reform in the broader Middle East and North Africa.

The growing worldwide demand for human rights and democracy reflected in these reports is not the result of the impersonal workings of some dialectic or of the orchestrations of foreign governments. Rather, this call derives from the powerful human desire to live in dignity and liberty and from the personal bravery and tenacity of men and women in every age and in every society who serve and sacrifice for the cause of freedom.